

As a resident of Bulga in the Hunter Valley, where we are constantly threatened by out-of-control coal mines, **I oppose** the proposed **Wilpinjong Coal Mine, Wilpinjong Extension Project** for the following reasons:

1. We do not need more new coal mines. The science on the danger of climate change is clear [1], [2]. Recently our elected representatives returned dewey-eyed from COP21 in Paris and immediately proceeded to approve more coal mines! Clearly, digging more coal in Australia and burning it overseas will bring more carbon into the atmosphere and will come to haunt us in the form of droughts, floods, bushfires and wild weather. This aspect is not considered anywhere in this or any other mine proposal I have ever seen.
2. The proposed new coal mine will destroy valuable agricultural land and associated underground aquifers. Under the current regulations all coal mines are allowed to expand - forever. To my knowledge, not a single coal mine in NSW has ever closed properly and restored the land to its original healthy condition. In the case of the Wilpinjong Coal Mine they are planning to leave three dirty final voids full of toxic water for the benefit of the future generations.
3. The current environmental regulations also give mines free hand in destroying irreplaceable ecological communities. The complex system of the environmental offsets is completely ineffective and getting worse with every regulatory change..
4. Coal mines in general and open cut mega-mines in particular, create dust and noise pollution that damages health of the local residents living in the neighbourhood. At the same time the mines own and run the dust and noise monitoring systems. Monitoring data are treated as a private property. Surely this is a conflict of interest!
5. Open cut coal mines also destroy the value of the surrounding rural properties and yet the current regulatory system puts the mine management in charge of any compensation. Once again, a conflict of interest! Furthermore, how can the putative profits of a foreign multinational company, Peabody Energy, justify the destruction of the village of Wollar and inevitable harm the lives and health of the local residents?
6. The economical benefits of the coal mining, such as jobs and royalties, are vastly overstated while the mines enjoy many free subsidies. How else could we explain that we are at the tail end of the biggest mining boom in history and yet all the levels of the Australian government are broke? Obviously, if Australia could not benefit from coal mining when the prices were high, digging more holes at the time when the coal prices are low is not going to work either. One would have to be pretty stupid or corrupt to believe in such a theory. Yet this is the "business as usual" approach that the current mine regulatory system in NSW takes. The quality of the economic analysis was recently demonstrated by Michael West in SMH [3]: *"a mere expansion*

of the marginal Wilpinjong, near Wollar, is worth 15 times more than the share market value of the US parent corporation.

Do we need to say more?

References

[1] COP21 "A turning point"

<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/news--events/general-news/12-13-2015-a-turning-point.html>

After two weeks, and just a day late, the [COP21 climate summit produced a historic agreement](#). It attempts to keep global temperatures "well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels".

To achieve this a rapid decarbonisation of the global economy must start immediately.

[2] Earth Day: scientists say 75% of known fossil fuel reserves must stay in ground

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/apr/22/earth-day-scientists-warning-fossil-fuels->

Three-quarters of known fossil fuel reserves must be kept in the ground if humanity is to avoid the worst effects of climate change, a group of leading scientists and economists have said in a statement timed to coincide with [Earth Day](#).

[3] Coal advisers dig us a hole

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/westy-20160221-gmzm49.html>

There's a public meeting at Wollar, near Mudgee, this week at which US coal major Peabody will seek community support for an approval to extend its Wilpinjong coal mine.

No doubt a report by Peabody's "expert", Deloitte Access Economics, will be brandished about with élan. For the report finds the Wilpinjong expansion has net benefits of \$745 million; something which may surprise Peabody's shareholders as their entire company is now worth \$US38 million.

That's correct; a mere expansion of the marginal Wilpinjong, near Wollar, is worth 15 times more than the share market value of the US parent corporation.